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REPAIR FIRMS SEE FEW BENEFITS, MUCH EXTRA WORK IN OPA'S HOURLY PRICE RULE

Operators of appliance service firms in the Washington, D. C., area fear that a vast increase in bookkeeping with no beneficial accomplishments will result if OPA offices enforce a recent regulation governing hourly rate charges for repair work.

Regulation 48 to RMPR 165 *permits* (but does not *require*) local OPA offices to order service firms to:

1. Give their customers detailed invoices showing the actual hours worked on a repair job;
2. Keep records showing the name of each employe doing repair work, the number of hours worked daily as well as during each pay period by each employe, and a separate statement showing how much of this work was performed on internal jobs for which no direct charge is made to customers. Also keep records showing the amount of wages paid these employes.

If local OPA offices feel that customers are being overcharged, they are empowered to enforce this regulation.

The need for prevention of illegitimate charges for appliance repairs is recognized by Washington repair agencies, but they feel, as one dealer expressed it, "this regulation will make gyps of all of us."

Another agency said, "We are so short now of clerical help that we are unable to do our regular invoicing and to comply with this new order, we will have to get a bookkeeping machine."

To arrive at the actual cost of a job, asserted one dealer, is practically impossible. "For example," he said, "my truck starts out in the morning on a call. The repairman spends 15 minutes at the home, but is gone from the store a couple of hours, and in the meantime, picks up or delivers five or six other appliances. How am I going to determine the time chargeable to the first call?"

At least one trade association has already filed a protest to its local OPA board outlining the hardships that will be imposed on its members by the regulation.

'DESERT' AIR CONDITIONER PRODUCERS ELIGIBLE FOR PRICE INCREASES

Manufacturers of evaporative coolers are eligible for individual price increases if they fulfill the requirements under which such increases may be granted, the OPA announced March 24. This is made possible by amendment No. 51 to Price Regulation 188.

In the same action, effective March 28, 1945, OPA made it clear that evaporative coolers are included under household air conditioning equipment and are covered by the general consumers durable goods regulation, Maximum Price Regulation No. 188.

Production of the coolers has been permitted in certain western states where they are needed by war workers because of the hot arid climate there. OPA said that a shortage of the coolers existed in these areas because none had been produced since August 1942. This action is expected to result in an increased supply through adjustment of the maximum prices manufacturers are permitted to charge, the OPA said.

OFFICIALS DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES OF RECONVERSION AFTER 'VE' DAY

After a couple of months in which it was practically a "taboo" subject, reconversion talk is cropping up in official circles, spurred on by the increasing likelihood of an early victory in Europe.

WPB Chairman J. A. Krug, denying reports that government agencies weren't doing anything at all about reconversion, said that "when the time comes the plans will not only be as good as the plans developed last summer, but will be much better, affording greater flexibility for dealing with the problems."

Much will depend on how much the Army and Navy will need after VE Day to continue to strike in full force against Japan. If cutbacks are relatively small, present tight controls will continue and probably only a limited "spot authorization" program would be permitted.

If cutbacks are as high as 25 to 35% (and some believe they may go as high as 50%), there will be a gradual lifting of restrictions and permitted production of consumers durable goods.

One group of officials is said to predict that civilians will see new refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and possibly automobiles before they get increased supplies of clothing, soap, shoes, and liquor.

Another possibility, voiced by Mr. Krug himself, is that a "nameless" automobile might be produced and sold to civilians before the end of the Japanese war. Such a policy conceivably could apply to household refrigerators—although this seems quite unlikely judging by attitudes of WPB officials contacted last week.

MORE 'FREON-12' IS PROMISED SOON—AND THIS TIME THEY SAY IT'S A SURE THING

The many rumors in the past few months about the probability of "Freon-12" refrigerant being released for general use in the industry has led some to regard current reports as a sort of a "wolf, wolf" cry.

But on very good authority we do hear that there will be further relaxation of restrictions on the use of "Freon-12," within a very short time—possibly a week or 10 days.

NEW PREFERENTIAL LISTS SET UP FOR PASSENGER CAR TIRES

A preferential list of occupations for use in selecting persons to receive passenger car tires has been prepared by OPA in cooperation with the War Manpower Commission. This list will be used in channeling the reduced quota of tires to persons whose transportation needs are regarded as most essential to the war effort.

Under the new plan the number of eligibles is not reduced, but is classified into four preference groups for the aid of local War Price and Rationing Boards in issuing tire certificates.

First priority, classed as Group I, is limited almost entirely to persons whose occupations are of emergency nature and to workers at establishments faced with production emergencies. Included within this group are eligible physicians, public health nurses, police, and employees at critical war industries, such as those producing urgently needed aircraft and ammunition that are experiencing a manpower emergency. The exact plants, however, will be determined on the advice of local WMC officials.

Group II includes persons employed in other essential plants and those whose occupations are highly important to the war effort. In this group, for example, are farmers, farm workers, and representatives of management, labor, and government who recruit for essential establishments.

Group III includes such occupations as buyers for essential establishments and persons who travel to essential establishments on request to perform necessary technical services, such as those who advise these establishments on machinery maintenance problems. Group IV takes in all other persons eligible for Grade I passenger tires.

(It would appear likely that refrigeration repairmen could qualify in Group I or II.)

PRICE CEILINGS ON ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES NOT CHANGED BY MPR 580

Retail price ceilings on electrical appliances are not affected by the recent OPA "freeze" order MPR No. 580 which was issued March 19. The only electrical items covered are lamps. The order generally applies to clothing, textiles, furniture, and house furnishings.

Present pricing methods of these categories are revised drastically by MPR 580. March 19, 1945, is established as the "base" day for determining prices, and retailers are required to prepare price charts by April 20 showing margins over "net invoice cost" for all goods covered by the order which were offered for sale on the base day.

PRICES SET FOR TWO MAKES OF HOME AND FARM FREEZERS

Maximum prices on farm and home freezers manufactured by American Refrigerator & Machine, Inc., of Minneapolis and the Gross Co. of Milwaukee have been established by the Office of Price Administration at \$670 and \$390, respectively.

The American Refrigerator freezer is described as a three-door 14.54-cu. ft. capacity chest powered by a $\frac{1}{3}$ -hp. condensing unit. Manufacturer's price to distributors is set at \$335; distributor's price to dealer, \$402; and sales to consumers at \$670.

To these prices may be added crating charges up to \$6 and actual shipping charges.

For the Gross Co. model No. 1125, described as 11.25 cu. ft. with $\frac{1}{4}$ -hp. condensing unit, factory price to distributor is established at \$195; on sales to dealers, \$234; on sales to consumers, \$390. Crating charges up to \$6 and shipping charges may be added to these prices.

MONITOR CORPORATION REPORTS ARRANGEMENTS WITH 18 MANUFACTURERS OF APPLIANCES

Disclosing that the Monitor Equipment Corp. "has concluded arrangements" with 18 manufacturers to produce appliances under the "Monitor" trademark for the distributor-owned organization, T. K. Quinn, president of the company, said specifications and designs for most of these appliances have been drawn up for the first postwar models.

Quinn said that although there were numerous inquiries from manufacturers who never had produced appliances before the war but had plans to do so, the company, "with the exception of one or two new manufacturers in the field," has placed orders with prewar makers. Size of the orders, he explained, is still tentative, based upon how War Production Board controls will be relaxed.

Among the appliances for which manufacturers have been selected are refrigerators, radio-television sets, air conditioning units, sewing machines, home freezers, and washing machines, he said. Eventually, he added, approximately 30 items will be merchandised under the Monitor brand.

Under the plan, Mr. Quinn explained, 60 independent distributors, who will hold stock in the parent company owning the brand name, will supply "some 7,000 to 8,000 independent retailers." Although there have been "more than enough applications from distributors to cover each of the 60 territories, we have not selected distributors in approximately 25% of the markets—Boston is one of these," he said.

The plan, Mr. Quinn asserted, will give participating independent distributors protection from the 30-day cancellation clause common in franchises given by appliance manufacturers. A majority vote of the distributors is required before any distributor's franchise can be cancelled—and then only if the distributor fails to meet 50% of his minimum sales quota during a six-month period, he said.

FAJANS AND BLAZER HEAD METROPOLITAN NEW YORK JOBBERS ASSOCIATION

Irving Fajans of Aetna Supply Co., New York City parts jobber, has been elected president of the Metropolitan Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Supply Jobbers Association of New York, Inc., and Benjamin V. Blazer of M. Blazer & Son, Passaic, N. J., has been chosen secretary-treasurer.

Comprising refrigeration and air conditioning jobbers in Metropolitan New York and New Jersey, this association has been designated as Region No. 2 by the National Refrigeration Supply Jobbers Association.

'END-USE' IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR MOTORS DESIGNATED FOR WAR USES

While fractional horsepower motor manufacturers reported at a recent meeting that the backlog of orders for motors for the armed forces was at a record low, new orders from the military have shown some increases, and the manufacturers recommended to WPB that action be taken to place orders for motors at least six to nine months in advance of the time they will be required.

On March 22 WPB announced that rated orders for electric motors and control equipment needed for specific war uses must be identified according to the ultimate end uses for which the items are required.

Purpose of requiring identification of these orders is to make it possible for WPB to take additional priority action when necessary to assure delivery of identified items of the most urgent war programs on the dates required, and to give the suppliers more definite information as an aid in scheduling his production.

Items of equipment requiring identification are fractional and integral horsepower motors and generators, electric motor control equipment, small air circuit breakers, aircraft switches and circuit breakers, and panel boards rated 600 volts or less for lighting and power distribution of the wall-mounted type for shipboard use.

Identification will be initiated by the Army, Navy, United States Maritime Commission, their prime contractors, or any other ultimate user when such equipment is needed for incorporation into products to be used directly by a military agency of the U. S. or under Lend-Lease, or for use in plants making products to be used by any military agency.

1945 COPPER PRODUCTION DUE TO FALL BELOW REQUIREMENTS

Sharply reduced estimates of copper production for 1945, prepared by the Copper Division of the War Production Board, indicate that instead of a surplus over essential requirements there will actually be a deficit of 208,000 tons for the year.

Increased drafting of 26-29 workers in mines, mills, smelters, and refineries, plus the lag in copper imports from Africa are cited as chief causes of the predicted shortage.

Original WPB estimates of high 1945 copper production had been based on adding 4,000 workers to the copper industry. Instead the industry now expects to lose about 1,800 of the 3,200 men in the 26-29 group to the Armed Forces. Replacements for these men are thought unlikely.

Secondary production of copper is expected to fall, based on experience in the first and second months this year, said WPB officials. A month ago it was thought that there would be a surplus of 39,000 tons of refined copper in the first quarter, but actually in January alone there was a deficit of 34,900 tons.

DEPARTMENT STORES FORM 'FROZEN FOOD INSTITUTE'

A "Frozen Food Institute" has just been formed by some leading department stores for the purpose of accumulating and disseminating among its members information relating to the processing, distribution, and use of frozen foods.

The department stores participating in the organization of the Institute include: Allied Stores Corp., Marshall Field & Co., Chicago; J. L. Hudson Co., Detroit; and R. H. Macy & Co., New York City.

Principal function of the institute, it has been indicated, is to determine what part the department stores can play in the distribution of frozen food. The emphasis will be on the frozen food itself, rather than on equipment for handling such products in the home, although this latter factor will undoubtedly come in for some consideration. One of the first studies will concern itself with the profit possibilities in frozen foods.

The institute will not design or manufacture frozen food cabinets, it was stated.

Gerald A. Fitzgerald, at present research director of Richardson & Robbins, Dover, Del., and formerly a member of the technical staff of General Foods Corp., will become director of the Frozen Food Institute as of April 1. Headquarters will be maintained in Syracuse, N. Y.